

THE WIND HORSE



NEWSLETTER OF CHAGDUD GONPA

SPRING 1997

Dear Sangha,

Tashi deleg! Best wishes to each of you for the Tibetan New Year (Losar) that began on February 8. Sometimes it seems strange to celebrate two new years so close together. At Chagdud Gonpa centers, the interval between January 1 and Tibetan New Year has always been intense and eventful, a time when hidden currents surface and are then purified and transformed by the powerful Vajrakilaya ceremonies.

I have been leading the extensive Vajrakilaya practice from the Dudjom lineage since 1980, when His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, then visiting California, told me that this sadhana would be of particular benefit in the West. When I conduct such ceremonies, my purpose is not to direct wrath at outer enemies with form or at inner demons without form. Rather, the intention of all the prayers, offerings, mudras, mantra recitation, lama dancing, and so forth is to create a pure field of activity in which you can subdue your own dualistic perception, cut through your grasping at outer objects, and free yourself from clinging to inner phenomena.

Until you accomplish this, you will be entangled in attachment and aversion, hope and fear, concepts of pure and impure. You will be happy momentarily, but unhappiness will inevitably follow. Lasting peace will elude you. These dualities are the real enemies and demons that hinder your spiritual realization. They will prevent you from serving sentient beings skillfully and impartially. They are obstacles to your enlightenment. They must be vanquished.

Ceremonies—Vajrakilaya at Losar, the drubchens, tsogs, daily practices—establish various mandalas that you enter by dropping ordinary concerns and bringing your mind into accord with the deities and lineage lamas. Through the merging of your motivation with their blessings, negativity falls away and you can experience the fundamental purity of your buddha nature.

This year and last, I took pleasure in the simultaneity of the Vajrakilaya ceremonies taking place at Rigdzin Ling and at Khadro Ling. Having made the choice to come to Brazil, of course I am happy to see that students here have the energy and receptivity needed to practice Tibetan Buddhism. Eighty people participated, and we concluded with lama dancing, which was taught to this new generation of Brazilian dancers by Maile Wall



and Jeff Miller. For four consecutive days during the ceremonies, vivid double rainbows appeared.

In a few months I will begin the temple (*lha khang*) and also a large Guru Rinpoche statue. I am an old man, and I am not going to hold back now. The *lha khang* will be the first traditional Tibetan Buddhist temple in South America.

Your support has helped to generate lasting benefit in

both the United States and Brazil, since some of my U.S. students have contributed generously to the *lha khang* construction fund. I am grateful that you share my belief that the seeds of dharma can ripen wherever conditions are created by pure intention.

Your lamas in the United States serve as authentic sources of dharma, and I am confident that you can rely on them. Still, at times I miss you very much, and I look forward to seeing many of you this summer at the drubchens, the retreats, and the Tagsham empowerments that Tertön Namkha Drimed will offer. Until then, though it may seem that we are far apart, this is not really true. My own practice increases these days and, with it, my love and compassion for all beings, including my old students. Abiding in the wisdom nature of appearances, beyond near and far, coming and going, makes the sense of separation fall away. May you experience this, too, this linking of intention through your meditation, your love, your kindness, your faith.

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In the dharma,
Chagdud Tulku

Lineage Holders of Inherent Truth

This is the fifteenth article in a series by Lama Drimed Norbu on the lineage holders of the Great Perfection, the simplest yet most profound spiritual approach of the Buddhist dharma. It is the second of two articles on Longchenpa.

For six or seven years after Longchenpa received all of the Great Perfection empowerments and teachings from his guru, Kumeradza, he meditated in retreat, mostly at Chimpu, where Guru Rinpoche had lived and practiced. He was blessed with visions of Guru Rinpoche, Vajrasattva, and the forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities. While in retreat at Chimpu at the age of thirty-two, he conferred empowerments and teachings of the *Vima Nyingt'hig* on a group of yogis and yoginis. During one stage of the empowerment, a yogini became a vehicle for the dharma protector Ekadzati, who advised Longchenpa about certain aspects of the ceremony and corrected his pronunciation, having him sing as she did in the haunting style of dakini language. During the main part of the empowerment, she sang out, "Mind is free of meditation—how joyful," and the environment was filled with lights and with magical and melodious songs; all of the disciples entered into deep meditative states transcending sleep and had visions of dharma protectors. Vajravarahi appeared and spoke to Longchenpa about his guru, Kumeradza, and Longchenpa's dharma activities. Finally, Longchenpa offered a song of realization, after which many dakinis appeared and dissolved into his body. All those gathered saw Longchenpa transformed into a radiant sambogakaya light body.

Not long after this a disciple gave him the text of the *Heartdrop Teachings of the Dakinis (Khadro Nyingt'hig)*, which had been discovered by Longchenpa's previous incarnation, Pema Ledretsal. He received another copy from a dharma protector. Longchenpa then went to receive transmission of the *Khadro Nyingt'hig* from a living disciple of Pema Ledretsal. Having assimilated these teachings, he bestowed them on another group of yogis and yoginis, and again the environment became a pureland.

In a vision, Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal approached Longchenpa. Vimalamitra was to their right, Vajravarahi to their left, and numerous dakinis blowing thighbone trumpets stood in front of them. Behind, many yogis and beautifully dressed dakinis danced ecstatically. The minds of all in attendance blended into luminous clarity beyond sleeping or waking consciousness. Longchenpa was joyous and sang a vajra song:

*O yogis, I am very happy and joyous.
Tonight we are in the Unexcelled Pure Land.
In our body, the palace of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities,
Flourishes the assembly of Buddhas, [the union of] clarity
and emptiness.
Buddhahood is not somewhere else, but in us.*

*O meditators, you who hold your mind one-pointedly,
Do not hold your mind at one place, but let it go at ease.
Mind is emptiness [or openness] whether it goes or it stays.
Whatever arises [in mind] is the [mere] play of the wisdom.*

The dharma protector Yudrönma advised him to move to the Fortress of Oddiyana in the Joyful Garden of Cloud of Lights. He wrote several volumes there, and his meditative realization reached the level of the third vision of the path of t'hodgal.

Vimalamitra appeared in a vision and gave him teachings, which inspired Longchenpa to write the *Lama Yangt'hig*, a great work on the *Vima Nyingt'hig*. He wrote the *Khadro Yangt'hig* commentaries clarifying the *Khadro Nyingt'hig* Great Perfection teachings of Guru Rinpoche. All of these, together with the further illuminating teachings of Longchenpa's *Zabmo Yangt'hig*, are part of the famous collection called the *Nyingt'hig Yabzhi*.

In the same vision Vimalamitra pointed his finger toward the Zha Temple in Uru, declaring that Longchenpa should restore it. Longchenpa revealed a terma (hidden treasure) in the temple that contained gold, which he used to finance the restoration. During reconstruction, several skulls and power objects were accidentally unearthed. One of the skulls flew into the air; suddenly a wild wind arose and a hail of earth and stone caused everyone to flee. The skulls began to knock against each other due to the suppressed demonic energies that had been released. One skull leapt up higher than the others, but Longchenpa recalled it with a gaze of blazing wrath. Appearing to others as Wrathful Guru Rinpoche, he crushed it underfoot and buried the remaining skulls beneath a great stupa.

For political reasons, Longchenpa moved for a time to Bhutan, where he established a monastery and teaching facility called Tharpa Ling in Bumtang. It exists even today as a place where Longchenpa's teachings can be studied and practiced.

Longchenpa returned often to his guru, Kumeradza, to refine his understanding and realization. Many times he offered his master everything he owned, relinquishing all clinging to material objects. With his great realization and scriptural knowledge, Longchenpa could have established many great monasteries, but he was not interested in creating institutions. He did not receive payment for his teachings, and whatever offerings he received he used to serve the dharma. Even when he received huge offerings, he never overtly expressed gratitude, but said simply that through such offerings the patrons themselves were accumulating merit. He was extremely kind to the poor and suffering, and in turn enjoyed the simple foods they gave him, dedicating their merit with aspiration prayers. He preferred solitude and valued natural surroundings, writing:

*Far from the towns full of entertainments,
Being in the forests naturally increases the peaceful
absorptions,
Harmonizes life in the Dharma, tames the mind,
And makes one attain ultimate joy.*

Longchenpa taught on all levels of the Buddhist path but focused mainly on the Great Perfection. He captured the meaning in simple words of advice:

*It is important to look straight at [the nature of] the
thoughts when they arise.
It is important to remain [in the nature] when you are
certain [about the realization of it].*

It is important to have the meditationless meditation as your meditation.

With no wavering, maintain it. This is my advice.

He also stated:

The present mind, which is unhindered—

No grasping at “this” [or “that”], free of any modification or dilutions, and

Unstained by [the duality of] grasped and grasper—

Is the nature of ultimate truth. Maintain this state.

At the age of fifty-six, Longchenpa wrote his spiritual testament known as the “Immaculate Radiance,” part of which follows:

As I have long ago realized the nature of samsara,

There is no essence in the worldly existents.

Now, as I am departing from my impermanent illusory body,

I shall tell you what are the beneficial things for you; please listen to me.

You are taking your life as real, but it will cheat you.

Its nature is changing and it has no reality.

By understanding its untrustworthy character,

Please practice Dharma from this very day.

Changing is the nature of friends, like [a gathering of] guests.

They get together for a while but soon separate forever.

By freeing yourself from attachments to friends,

Please practice Dharma that benefits you forever.

Honeylike wealth drips away even as you collect it.

Although you earned it, others will enjoy it.

Now, while you have the power, invest it for the sustenance of your future lives,

By earning merits by giving in charity. . . .

People are impermanent like [groups of] earlier and greater visitors.

Elder people have gone early. Younger people will go later.

People of the present, none will live for a hundred years.

Please realize it [the nature of impermanence] at this very moment.

Appearances of this life take place like the events of today.

Appearances of the bardo will take place like dreams in the night.

Appearances of the next life will come as fast as tomorrow.

Please practice Dharma at this very moment. . . .

Among all the dharmas, the ultimate pith of luminous clarity

Is the Nyingthig, the sacred meaning.

This is the supreme path that leads you to Buddhahood in a single life span.

Please [through this path] accomplish the great blissful universal sublime. . . .

The nature of mind is the ultimate sphere, like space.

The nature of space is the nature of mind, the innate nature.

In meaning they are not separate. They are evenness, Great Perfection.

Please realize the nature at this very moment.



Longchenpa with Khenpo Ngaga, Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, and Khenpo Dorje; Chagdud Rinpoche's Longchen Nyingt'hig lineage.

Various phenomena are like reflections in a mirror.

They are emptiness while they are appearing, and emptiness is not other than the appearances themselves.

They are joyful [phenomena], free from designations as one or many.

Please realize the nature at this very moment. . . .

My delight at death is much greater than

The joy of traders who have made their fortunes at sea.

The lords of the gods who have proclaimed their victory in war,

Or those sages who are abiding in absorption.

Now Pema Ledreltsal [Longchen Rabjam] will not remain here much longer.

I go to secure the blissful and deathless nature.

Finally, assuming the lion posture of dharmakaya and settling his mind in the vast expanse of basic space, he left the body of Longchenpa, which remained undisturbed for twenty-five days. During this time, many miraculous signs of his passing occurred. The ground shook, thunder resounded, streams of rainbow light and canopies appeared in the sky. It was cold at that time, yet the ice melted and flowers bloomed. During Longchenpa's cremation, many relics came from his bones, revealing his attainment of buddhahood.

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Contact Points

- Rigdzin Ling is in need of a cook for both of the drubchens (May 22–June 4 and June 6–14) and the Dzogchen retreat (June 19–July 31) this summer. Compensation is negotiable.

- We are also looking for someone to volunteer to wash dishes and do general maintenance in the kitchen during the summer events.

- Rigdzin Ling would like to buy a reasonably priced car or truck, in good running condition, from a sangha member.

- Rooms are now available in Tara House for individuals who want to do retreat. They will be filled during the events this summer but will be available again in early August.

- A Rigdzin Ling volunteer whose work strongly supports Chagdud Gonpa Foundation's activity is in need of \$50 per month in order to continue offering this level of support.

If you can help with any of the above requests, please contact Kim at Rigdzin Ling.

- Tsog is a practice in which pleasing substances are assembled, transformed through meditation, and then offered in order to gather the accumulations of merit and timeless awareness. At Rigdzin Ling, sangha members regularly perform at least five tsog offerings each month. Traditional tsog offering substances include food, alcohol, incense, butterlamps, and flowers. The merit is dedicated to all beings, but it can also be dedicated to specific individuals or purposes. We invite you to join us in sponsoring these tsogs on either a onetime, monthly, or annual basis. We also accept donations for daily butterlamp offerings. Contact Pat Von Alten at Rigdzin Ling for details.

- One complimentary issue of the *Windhorse* is sent to each person added to the Chagdud Gonpa Foundation mailing list. Subsequent issues are sent only to subscribers. If you would like to subscribe, please send (for one year) \$5, or \$10 if you live outside the United States, to Rigdzin Ling, checks payable to Chagdud Gonpa Foundation.



Prison Outreach Programs

For anyone interested in being a contact person for prisoners who want to become involved in Tibetan Buddhist practice, the National Buddhist Prison Sangha has a program to refer prisoners to practitioners in their area. All Chagdud Gonpa Foundation centers with resident lamas are now listed with NBPS, and other centers or individuals can be as well.

All volunteers will work under the guidance of a Chagdud Gonpa lama. When a prisoner contacts the NBPS requesting information on Tibetan Buddhism, the NBPS will call the nearest Chagdud Gonpa lama, who will then give the referral to a volunteer. Volunteers can specify whether they want to limit the interaction to correspondence, or would also consider personal visits, or organizing and leading practice groups.

Please contact Ingrid at Rigdzin Ling for further information.

Using Time:

How many practitioners dream of this scenario: a free place to stay, food provided at regular intervals, and time to practice? It's called retreat, and some people would give their eyeteeth to be able to do it, if they could just make it work.

There are certain people who find themselves living this scenario, but not by choice. They were placed there by society to correct some commonly perceived problem. Their situation is called prison instead of retreat, but what if they decided to use their prison time for spiritual practice? Perhaps they might come to consider what seems a loss of freedom as an opportunity to gain inner peace and contentment.

Some of us at Padma Ling in Spokane have been privileged to volunteer our time at the Airway Heights Correction Center, the largest medium-security prison in the state of Washington. For the past year and a half, we have conducted weekly practice sessions for a group of inmates. The commitment of these inmates has grown to such an extent that they recently asked for and received a Red Tara empowerment at the Center.

Padma Ling's connection with the prison started one day with a phone call from the facility's chaplain. The chaplain explained that one of the prisoners was a Buddhist and asked if we would be willing to provide spiritual services for him. Lama Yöntän was the first person to take on the job. He had been told many years before by H.E. Chagdud Rinpoche that one day he would help people in prison. Lama Yöntän went to a three-hour orientation class, got his red entry badge, and started to arrange practice sessions and teachings for the Buddhist, as well as other prisoners who might want to attend. The group grew quickly, and soon I, Judy Patterson, Dexter Amend, and Barbara Mueller also attended the orientation and received our red badges.

As we later found out, Daniel, the inmate who first requested the Buddhist services, did so as a joke. He had no particular religious persuasion, and when the chaplain asked him about it, on a lark, he pronounced himself a Buddhist. However, Daniel attended the practice sessions and has become a committed Buddhist practitioner. At first, he was so restless that within 20 minutes he would get up and run out of the sessions. Now he is calm and sometimes leads the chanting during Tara puja.

In a letter to Padma Ling, inmate Bruce Allen Lee had this to say about his involvement in the Airway Heights group: "For years I prepared through reading Buddhist texts, studying Sanskrit and engaging in meditation. Then suddenly, without notice, I was told I would be transferred from the notorious old state prison to another newer one.

"While it may be unusual for a sangha to develop in a prison, the Red Tara practice opened doors for such a sangha to become inspired. Under the careful and compassionate instruction of Lama Inge and Lama Yöntän I have begun to work on my own flaws. I have taken refuge and I am now able to practice within the prison sangha as though in a monastery. We work together to nurture our Buddha qualities."

One of the greatest concerns of the prison sangha is the period of transition for people after they have been released. Often, release brings stress and trauma. As his release time approached, Val, one of our group members, started to have

Preparation for Death

This issue of *Windhorse* takes a look at some of the practicalities of death and dying. The second of the four thoughts that turn the mind toward dharma is that “all who are born are impermanent and bound to die.” And yet when we or someone close to us is facing death, we are often at a loss about how to deal with the situation.

Khadro Jane Tromge has focused strongly on the practice of *p'howa* in her training and is now teaching the method to others. The following letter of closure, which she wrote, is based upon advice given to her by H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche in response to her questions about the dying process, and could serve as a model for similar letters by other Buddhist practitioners. Jane is presently expanding Rinpoche's booklet, *Life in Relation to Death*, to include information on living wills, durable power of attorney, and other issues related to death.

She is also working with Rinpoche in writing a detailed book on dying for practitioners of Vajrayana Buddhism.



Khadro Jane Tromge

“What I need from you now is calmness, release, and the recognition that however my death appears outwardly, inwardly it is a profound spiritual opportunity.”

To my much-loved family and friends, instructions for the time of my death:

First of all, I want you to know how deeply I care for you. Our connection in this lifetime, especially our moments of affection and happiness, represent my great good fortune. The process of dying powerfully brings home the realization that as surely as we have come together we must separate and the time in between is all too brief. Of course I feel sorrow, but I also feel a sweet and intense appreciation of what we have shared.

As death approaches, however, any ordinary attachment I have for you will not help, since I am powerless to turn back from this journey. And your attachment to me, though very natural, will not be useful because it may distract me and turn my attention to where I cannot really return—back to the circumstances of my life with you—and hinder me in the tricky transition of death. What I need from you now is calmness, release, and the recognition that however my death appears outwardly, inwardly it is a profound spiritual opportunity. Your prayers, arising from your own depths of love and compassion, will certainly support me in my efforts to use this opportunity well.

You know that my spiritual training in recent years has been in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. The lineage masters of this tradition have left clear descriptions of what occurs at death and what meditational skills are needed to negotiate death's transition. Specifically, I have learned a technique called *p'howa*, or transference of consciousness at the moment of death. I have asked some Buddhist practitioners to be present at my death and assist me in the practice. They will help me sit up, if possible, and they will do the practice with me. They may also tap the top of my head, since the purpose of *p'howa* is to direct the consciousness out the crown of the head toward a destination of spiritual rebirth. *P'howa* does not involve any flamboyant ritual, and it does not take more than an hour or so. Hospitals are usually very willing to create space and time for this meditation, especially if you discuss it with the staff ahead of time.

What follows is a checklist of instructions. I hope they are clear, because I may not be able to clarify them when I am closer to death, but you may ask any of my lamas or dharma friends on the list below if you have questions.

1. Please notify my lama and dharma friends in time for them to be present before I die. Of course, it may be hard to tell when the actual moment of death will occur; if it somehow happens that they can't arrive in time, don't worry. The blessings of my spiritual training will support my passing.

2. Please do not touch my body, particularly my hands or feet, as death approaches because your loving contact may draw my attention downward when my whole focus should be at the crown of my head.

3. If no other spiritual practitioner is present when I die, tap my skull in the center about eight fingerwidths back from my original hairline. This could be of immense benefit in channeling the exit of my consciousness.

4. It is best if my body is not handled much before the *p'howa* practice is finished. Certain signs occur when transfer-

ence is successful, which other practitioners will recognize. When the practice has been successful, it doesn't matter at all what happens to my corpse. I would prefer it to be cremated as inexpensively as possible and the ashes used in the making of *tza-tsas*, small sacred images stamped out of clay. A lama can instruct you. If *tza-tsas* prove too difficult to make, just have my dharma friends scatter the ashes and offer prayers. They are only ashes, the merest residue of my life.

5. I am an organ donor, and hopefully my consciousness will be transferred before anyone comes to harvest my organs. If not, don't worry: my lama assures me that the merit of offering organs supersedes the disturbance to the body and my consciousness will be directed to a high state of rebirth on the basis of that merit.

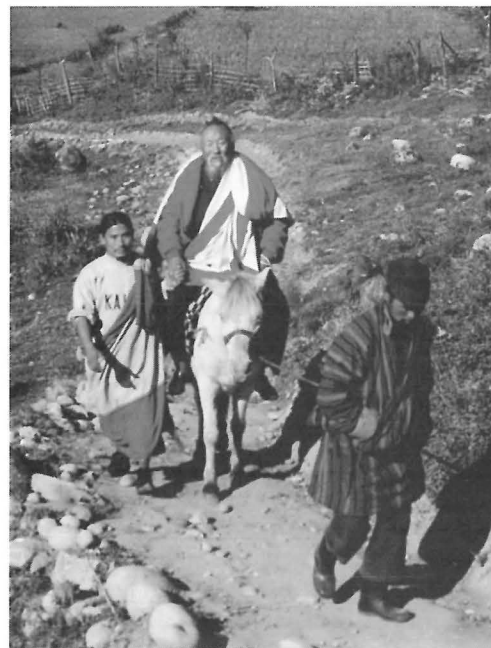
6. There is a slight possibility that transference won't be achieved, my organs won't be harvested, and my consciousness will remain lodged in my body for up to four days and three nights. This will cause difficulties for you, because my body should definitely not be buried or cremated until the consciousness has exited—a lama can check to see if it has done so. In California and other states, you can keep the body as long as you have a death certificate and the body is properly refrigerated, but you can't bury or cremate it yourself. I don't want to burden you with my dead body (forgive me if many humorous possibilities spring to mind), but I want you to at least know about not destroying it prematurely. If you can't find a place to let it rest, then call the lamas and my dharma friends and urge them to practice *p'howa*. Performing *p'howa* successfully from a distance requires a very great meditator, so it would be best if they did the practice next to the body.

7. Please make offerings to the lamas who perform prayers and ceremonies after my death. I have designated a certain amount of money in my will for this purpose. I know I have not been the most virtuous person in this lifetime, and unless *p'howa* is successful and I take rebirth in a state beyond suffering and can purify my misdeeds there, I may be confronted after death with the full weight of my negative actions of body, speech, and mind. This will definitely cause me suffering. You can alleviate this by asking my dharma friends to arrange for prayers to be said and for ceremonies to be conducted. Particularly, I want to sponsor a practitioner to recite the Akshobhya mantra and to create an image of that buddha. This will cost about \$130 and can be facilitated through the Mahakaruna Foundation, listed below. My lamas will suggest other ceremonies.

A list of lamas and dharma friends appears below.

Thank you for all that you have done and will do. I know that it requires a certain tolerance to honor my spiritual belief system when it is different from your own, but I can hope that your respect for my requests will become a source of positive energy that will ease your mind at the time of your own death. According to the teachings I have received, if all goes well, after death I will find liberation from selfish concerns in the realms beyond death and will attain vastly enhanced abilities to benefit you and all beings. This is what I most wish. May it come about just so!

Mahakaruna Foundation, P.O. Box 344
Junction City, CA 96048, tel. (916) 623-2302



Wherever I go, to an airport, a restaurant, mountaintop, or shopping mall, I always pray that when I come back to this place in the after-death bardo, I will recognize the true nature of my mind, remember the kindness of my lamas, and that I will lead all the beings who have connection with me in this moment to liberation.

H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

Chagdud P'hande Ling: Place of Temporary and Ultimate Benefit

H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche is guiding some of his East Coast sangha members in the establishment of a new care-giving facility, Chagdud P'hande Ling. A nonprofit organization registered in Maine, P'hande Ling will offer assisted living, health, hospice, and long-term residential care and visitation services for elderly, chronically, and terminally ill adults, including people with AIDS, in a Buddhist community setting. It will provide access to high-quality allopathic and complimentary care in an environment of compassion, mindfulness, dignity, and respect. Residential living opportunities for families and staff affiliated with the P'hande Ling community will also be available. The organization will provide rooms for meditation practice in the Nyingma tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism under the direction of Chagdud Rinpoche and his designated lamas, host retreats conducted by visiting lamas, and offer daily practice sessions. Some time in the future, we would also like to provide a nursing, geriatric, and chronic residential care unit for patients who need more intensive medical services.

P'hande Ling is in the early stages of planning. Our goal is to provide care for about fifteen patients by 1998, on both a private-pay and cost-reimbursement basis. If you would like to be involved, want more information, would like to be on our mailing list, or know of someone who might be interested in such services, please contact Marina Storper-Stretch, MHS, 8 Sugar Maple Lane, Keene, NH 03431, tel. (603) 358-5284, fax 357-3317, or Sally Ember, online: SALMBER@aol.com.

Terry's Offering

I knew Terry Looper-Laska for only three days. She was introduced to me as a student of H.E. Chagdud Rinpoche who was dying of lung cancer and had requested that some of Rinpoche's students come to her home and pray during the final days of her life. My initial response was one of fear, and then came the doubt that with my limited spiritual practice I could actually help. But I went to her home with the aspiration to support her during her transition. I never imagined that she, through her example, would offer so much to me.

Her bedroom was light and airy. An oxygen machine hummed steadily. As curtains drifted in the partially opened windows, the afternoon sun angled in and touched the woman lying on the bed. She appeared to be sleeping, but her breath came in quick gasps. It was as if there was never enough air to quench her thirst for it. Over the next two days her relatives and close friends came and went, and then only her daughter, Larissa, her husband, Steve, and a few sangha members remained with her.

As I sat, prayed, and watched I felt my initial fear of becoming involved in the process begin to fall away. With death so close at hand, my prayers were more direct and focused. There was no time for distraction or delay. I could see how, in my life, I had repeatedly let fear limit my ability to help others. In watching Terry's process, I glimpsed that as long as we have hope and fear we will remain bound but that in their resolution we will be liberated.

I have no idea whether Terry realized the extent of her generosity in opening her home and her death to us. But from what I saw in a video she had made for her friends about working with her illness and facing her death, that was just the way she was. Her faith in the dharma and her diligence in applying the teachings that she had received truly impressed me. Chagdud Rinpoche's blessing was undeniably there, as Chenrezig, as Tara, and as Terry. The power of that blessing deeply affected me.

On the third day Terry's breathing was more labored. She spoke less and the level of the morphine in the bottle at her bedside dropped steadily. She lay in her room surrounded by family photos, in a house full of things that were no longer of use to her, and we prayed that she could let go. As evening approached the smell of baking cookies filled the house almost too intensely, and her dog, who had been on edge all day, paced through the house barking sharply. Later that night, as was their routine, she and Steve did *p'howa* practice together.

A couple of hours later she died. By the time we arrived, Steve had said his good-byes and was sleeping deeply, for the first time in more than six weeks, in the next room. When I entered the room, what struck me most was the silence. Terry's body was just a shell without any real presence. The oxygen machine had been turned off. Now there was only the breeze in the wide-open windows. As our prayers filled the room, each of us had the distinct impression that she had let go. At four-thirty a rooster started to crow and we finished our prayers. We left a note for Steve and walked out into the dawn.

Maile Wall

This article was written to encourage sangha members to become involved in similar situations if the opportunity arises.



Chenrezig: Bodhisattva of Compassion

Impermanence

When Tony Leitner, a dear friend and sangha member, died at his home on November 4, 1996, impermanence, a central theme of the Buddhadharma, struck deeply and close to home. All who heard of Tony's sudden passing could only respond in shock and sadness.

It was Tony who first invited H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche to Los Angeles in 1986. He then took responsibility for the formation and development of T'hondup Ling. He handled the immigration process that enabled Lama Chödrak Gyatso, who is now our resident lama, to come to the United States. Throughout the years, all of the Los Angeles dharma centers have relied upon Tony time and again for advice and guidance, and he will be greatly missed.

Since his passing occurred just before a dream yoga retreat held in Los Angeles, Chagdud Rinpoche was in town and was able to visit the mortuary and perform *chod* practice to dispel obstacles.

Lama Gyatso personally oversaw the details of Tony's care in the forty-nine days following his death. Starting with the funeral ceremony at the mortuary and continuing for six consecutive Sundays, Lama Gyatso led extensive Red Vajrasattva practices during which large tsogs and butterlamp offerings were made on Tony's behalf. On the second to last Sunday, ashes from the cremation were purified during an elaborate ceremony, mixed with clay, and formed into *tza-tsas*. On the last Sunday, Lama Gyatso performed a final blessing and removal of obstacles, and the *tza-tsas* were cast into the ocean.

Having been a close friend of Tony's and having taken part in the forty-nine-day practice, I felt a deep appreciation for what had occurred. For the past twenty years, Tony had made great efforts to bring the dharma to this country, knowing there would

be benefit, and in his own passing we saw tangible signs of that benefit. We are fortunate in the West to know lamas like Chagdud Rinpoche and Lama Gyatso who have received traditional Buddhist training and possess the skills necessary to benefit us during the critical time of our death. Lama Gyatso has decided to make these extensive forty-nine-day ceremonies available in Los Angeles to sangha members and to any of the general public who might be interested. Please contact T'hondup Ling for details.

Don Delaquil

While on pilgrimage I received word of Tony's passing and wrote this simple poem:

The day before election day
 You elect to withdraw your ballot.
 The day before election day
 You make a choice much more profound.
 As I arrive in Kathmandu,
 You arise from evening slumber.
 As I make my way through customs,
 You make your morning tea.
 As I reach the Great Stupa of Boudhanath,
 You enter your final meditation.
 My heart leaps at the sight
 Of the eyes of transcendence.
 Your heart leaps as you enter the bardo of knowing.
 No turning back,
 Our guides are ever with us.
 No turning back from choices this complete.
 Your journey ends
 In a lotus to remind us
 Our journey begins
 In that garden ever sweet.

LeRoy Griggs



*H.H. Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche blessing stupas
 at Rigdzin Ling*



Enlightenment stupa at Rigdzin Ling

Chagdud Gonpa Stupa Projects

Ten years ago, on a windy, pine-covered hill overlooking the Spokane River, a stupa dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava was built and consecrated by Lama Tharchin Rinpoche, Lama Inge, and the Spokane sangha. Padma Ling will celebrate ten years of the presence of this symbol of enlightened mind by restoring and enhancing the stupa and its surroundings. Donations are being accepted for the purchase of paint, prayer flag materials, etc. and can be sent to the Stupa Restoration Project c/o Padma Ling.

In the summer of 1995 volunteers at Rigdzin Ling began to enact H.E. Chagdud Rinpoche's vision of constructing eight twenty-foot stupas commemorating the miracles of the Buddha's life. This was the start of one of the most ambitious and elaborate stupa projects ever undertaken in the West. By the end of the first summer of activity, most of the precious substances had been collected for the interior of the eight stupas, and in October of last year the first two completed stupas were consecrated.

This summer, volunteers will begin constructing the remaining six stupas, in the hope of bringing Rinpoche's vision to fruition. Everyone involved in this project will receive the blessings of enlightened mind, and incalculable merit will be created. An additional \$9,500 in donations is needed to fund the concrete work, sculpture, painting, and consecration rituals for each stupa. At this time three of them have been sponsored, as has one-quarter of another one. If you would like to help sponsor the remaining stupas, please contact Kim at Rigdzin Ling. You may also donate gold, silver, precious and semiprecious stones, crystals and crystal balls, and brocades, which will be placed within the stupas. And as always, volunteers will be needed for construction.

Sangha News

Rigdzin Ling

Last fall, H.H. Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche gave the Sera Khadro cycle of empowerments at Rigdzin Ling. During his visit he, along with Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche and H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, reconsecrated the newly painted Lotus and Enlightenment stupas. After Khyentse Rinpoche's departure, Chagdud Rinpoche offered the oral transmission of Patrul Rinpoche's famous commentary, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

It was a quiet winter here as many people focused their efforts on formal practice and retreat. During that time, a small but dedicated group worked steadily at supporting the dharma activities of Rinpoche, Lama Drimed, and the sangha as a whole. In January, a number of sangha members traveled to Brazil to receive Dzogchen teachings from Chagdud Rinpoche, while others attended Lama Drimed's winter Dzogchen retreat in Oregon. Upon their return to Rigdzin Ling, a Vajrakilaya drubchen was held to usher in the new Tibetan year.

Tara House construction continues. Wiring and carpet are being installed in the new addition, and the kitchen just received a new coat of paint. The line of prayer flags has been extended farther east with the addition of three new flag poles. Volunteers began constructing the next six stupas in the middle of April. The staff of Padma Publishing has been busy with the reprinting of *Gates to Buddhist Practice* and the *Nang-jang*, the final editing of Longchenpa's book *The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, and one other major book project under way.

From April 25 to 27, we hosted Sogyal Rinpoche for a three-day seminar, *Living Well, Dying Well*, in nearby Weaverville. Chagdud Rinpoche will arrive in late May for a two-month summer visit and will preside over two drubchens, a wealth ceremony, and the summer Dzogchen retreat. During the Dzogchen retreat H.E. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche will bestow three weeks of empowerments and transmissions from the Tagsham terma cycle that were specifically requested by Chagdud Rinpoche.

Ati Ling

After our long search, the sangha has settled into its new center in Occidental. On Sunday mornings, we gather in the shrine room after a drive over the hills from Napa or Santa Rosa or St. Helena. The fire burns in the small wood stove; Sophia, our youngest member, toddles around, arranging people and toys, and sangha members arrive one by one, shedding their boots and finding a spot to sit. Tulku Jigme Rinpoche walks across the way from his new house and welcomes us. The room slowly warms as we practice, and through the wide window we can see the dripping redwoods and rising mist.

Through all the searching and discussion and fund-raising, a new sense of community and greater devotion to our lama have arisen in the sangha. We also seem to be learning to value one another in a new way: acknowledging the small gifts of vacuum cleaner bags and tea, the larger ones of time and energy and expertise.

In particular we would like to thank Deana and Bruce Darby for their tremendous efforts—Deana as our departing coordinator, Bruce in his work with Padma Publishing's tape archive, and their daughter Sophia for bringing us such joy. We wish them the best in their new home in Brooklyn.

Padma Ling

All of us at Padma Ling wish you a happy Fire Ox year. To prepare for it we held a "Western Losar"—a five-day T'hröma retreat from December 26 to 31. Since many people are on vacation during that period, it is a convenient time to do retreat. More people attended than ever before, and we look forward to having this retreat every year.

The planned pilgrimage to India and Nepal has been postponed until February 1998. This should give all interested people enough time to find the funds, a place for the dog, and vacation time. Our plan is to visit Varanasi, Bodhgaya, Lumbini, and the four holy places around Kathmandu: the Great Stupa in Boudhanath, Swayambu, Parping, and



Tulku Jigme Rinpoche

Namo Buddha. To reserve a place, call Lama Inge or Lama Yöntän at Padma Ling.

We have recently noticed a marked increase in people's interest in the Buddhist dharma. We were visited by a busload of residents from a retirement center, by a troop of Cub Scouts, several school classes, and many individuals, all eager to find out more about Buddhism. In response, we have inaugurated a practice study group on Monday evenings. Daily practice continues to be held at 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekends. We are happy to provide a monthly calendar listing of teachings and other events upon request.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of our stupa, we will restore it with fresh paint and replace the surrounding prayer flags. (See story on page 9 for details.) We also plan to spruce up the center this summer by repainting the shrine room. When it is new and shiny, we hope to host H.E. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche—probably sometime in July.

Dechhen Ling

The annual Tara Tsog was performed in early November 1996 and participation was as wholehearted as ever. H.E. Chagdud Rinpoche and Khadro Jane Tromge's presence was precious, as was the kindhearted participation of Tulku Jigme, Lama Drimed, and other lamas, especially the skilled translator Lama Chökyi Nyima. The blessings truly inspired us and deepened the practice of all who attended.

In the last part of November, Lama Gyaltsen and his wife and baby came for a visit. We performed T'hröma Tsog and at Thanksgiving we did Chenrezig practice, presided over by Lama Gyaltsen.

At the Asian Celebration, held annually in Eugene, we made and sold momos. Many participated, both friends and sangha members, making it a successful fund-raising event. We extend our thanks to all who helped.

In 1995 we replaced the foundation of River House. This last year, we upgraded the kitchen with commercial sinks, new appliances, flooring, and wall paint. Our intention is to continue the process of improving the building and grounds.

Also, we have ongoing mortgage payments. In 1981, River House was purchased for \$56,500. Since then, we have paid \$80,000 on the mortgage. Completely buying back the mortgage this year for \$39,000 would be quite a savings over the \$85,000 it would cost in

mortgage payments we would have to make over the next fifteen years.

That we are able to invite accomplished teachers and receive precious teachings and empowerments from them, and that we have had a place to practice and meditate, is due to the ongoing generosity and compassion of many supporters. Without your help it would be difficult to provide these opportunities. We would like to extend our gratitude to all past, present, and future contributors.

Amrita

Amrita's activities continue to evolve, reminding us of the ever-changing quality of life. On New Year's Eve we held our fifth annual Red Tara Tsog. Lama Padma Gyatso has been leading retreats every other month. Much to our delight, he has also initiated a new series of teachings, which he gives on the first and third Monday of each month. These basic teachings have helped us to prepare

for the retreats by deepening our understanding of meditation and practice.

One of our sangha's strengths, which is especially appreciated by the sangha families, is that the children are encouraged to become involved in dharma activities. About eleven children, whose ages range from eighteen months to eleven years, are an integral part of our community. It is a delight to see them being exposed to the dharma at such an early age.

A seven-year-old named Tara recently wrote her first story, about a girl and her dog, which she proudly read to Lama Padma. At one point, the dog got into some trouble and the girl decided that he was "a bad dog." Instantly, the deity Red Tara appeared to the girl and said, "This is a dream dog." We were amazed to see how well the seeds of dharma had been planted in the mind of this child, who had heard Lama Tsering's dream yoga teachings last June.

Chagdud Gonpa Brasil

Khadro Ling, Três Coroas



Black Hat dancers during Vajrakilaya ceremony



Brazilian sangha members



Khadro Ling's children

PRACTICE BY THE DAYS OF THE MOON

* Eclipse of the sun; practice is multiplied 10,000 times.

**Eclipse of the moon; practice is multiplied 1,000 times.

May	
1	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
6	New Moon: Vajrasattva
14	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
16	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
22	Full Moon: P'howa
29	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
31	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day

June	
5	New Moon: Vajrasattva
12	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
14	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
20	Full Moon: P'howa
27	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
29	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day

July	
4	New Moon: Vajrasattva
12	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
14	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
19	Full Moon: P'howa
26	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
28	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day

August	
3	New Moon: Vajrasattva
11	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
13	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
18	Full Moon: P'howa
24	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
26	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day

September	
*1	New Moon: Vajrasattva
9	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
11	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
**16	Full Moon: P'howa
23	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
25	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day

October	
1	New Moon: Vajrasattva
9	First Quarter Moon: Tara Day
11	Tenth Day: Guru Rinpoche Day
15	Full Moon: P'howa
22	Last Quarter Moon: Tara Day
24	Twenty-fifth Day: Dakini Day
31	New Moon: Vajrasattva

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Rigdzin Ling Summer Events

H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

Red Vajrasattva Drubchen, May 27-June 4: This practice is an extremely swift, profound method for accumulating merit and wisdom and for purifying the emotional afflictions and confused concepts that obscure mind's essential nature. It is from a cycle revealed by Padgyal Lingpa and includes an extensive death ceremony that provides the opportunity to sponsor practice for the benefit of specific deceased persons with whom one has had a connection.

Essence of Siddhi Drubchen, June 6-14: Revealed as a mind treasure by H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, this practice integrates the three roots of Vajrayana practice: the lama, yidam, and dakini. Lama dances celebrating the Eight Aspects of Padmasambhava will be performed for the public on the morning of June 14.

Orgyan Jambhala Wealth Ceremony, June 18: This ceremony, a treasure revealed by H.H. Kusum Lingpa, helps practitioners realize a wealth of positive spiritual and worldly conditions that foster accomplishment. Those unable to attend can sponsor and obtain personal wealth vases consecrated during the ceremony.

Six-Week Dzogchen Retreat (Restricted), June 19-July 31: The first- and third-year retreats of the four-year Dzogchen retreat program will be offered. The first year is open to practitioners who have completed the required ngondro accumulations; all participants must receive Chagdud Rinpoche's or Lama Drimed's permission to attend.

H.E. Namkha Rinpoche will bestow empowerments and transmissions from the Tagsham terma cycles from June 20 to July 10 at Rigdzin Ling. These empowerments will focus on the cycle entitled *Yidam Gongdu (Union of Enlightened Intent of Chosen Deities)*, a mandala of which Hayagriva is the principal deity.

Lama Drimed will offer a Dudjom Tersar Ngondro retreat from August 9 to 16 and a Chetzun Nyingt'hig retreat from September 19 to 28. Preregistration requested. Telephone (916) 623-2714 for details and event rates.